



APO *news*

APO Secretariat Reform Plan

The 48th APO Governing Body Meeting held in Seoul, Republic of Korea, 13–15 June 2006, was epochal in that it approved a number of proposals by the Secretariat that will have a long-term impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization. Among the more significant were the Secretariat Reform Plan, provision of airfares to and waiver of participating country expenses payment for private-sector participants attending APO projects, and increasing the Working Capital Fund. Another major proposal of the Secretariat that after consideration the Governing Body decided to review at its 2007 meeting in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, was the new membership contribution formula. This is a report on the Secretariat Reform Plan.

APO Secretary-General Shigeo Takenaka's Secretariat Reform Plan, which covers the areas of Secretariat restructuring, personnel policy, and financial discipline and management, has a two-fold objective: 1) improving organizational effectiveness and work performance and 2) maximizing resources for improving the quality of APO services to member countries. Under the plan, the number of departments in the Secretariat will be reduced from six to the following four: Administration and Finance, Research and Planning, Industry, and Agriculture, eliminating Environment and Information and Public Relations. Among the reasons cited for this restructuring were: the small staff strength of the Secretariat of less than 50; a myriad of small departments that impedes better utilization of manpower resources as it does not allow for flexibility in staff deployment; a top-heavy organizational structure; and encumbrances to communication and coordination within the Secretariat under the current structure.



Secretary-General Shigeo Takenaka

In his reference paper on the reform plan submitted to the Governing Body, the Secretary-General emphasized that the restructuring does not imply diminishing interest in Green Productivity or sacrificing the publication and IT programs. It essentially means integrating those two departments with others and not the discontinuation of their services. Staff members involved will be redeployed.

The Secretary-General's proposal on personnel policy has two aspects: Increasing staff mobility within the Secretariat through more transfers among departments and at all levels; and introducing an effective staff appraisal system enabling salary increments to be linked with performance. He sees this as an important step toward achieving a proper balance between administration and project costs.

Like all organizations, the APO has its own financial regulations and project regulations. However, they do not cover every possible contingency that may arise from the multitude of APO activities taking place across the length and breadth of Asia and the Pacific. This situation has given room for departments in the Secretariat to manage project finances in their own ways, a phenomenon often referred to as "silo thinking," making the effective monitoring of their activities difficult. The Secretary-General said that current financial procedures were being reviewed for greater clarity, efficiency, and accountability, adding that more needs to be done.

(Continued on page 5)

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"Dreams are renewable. No matter what our age or condition, there are still untapped possibilities within us and new beauty waiting to be born."

Dale E. Turner

INSIDE

- 2.... p-Watch—Australia
- 3.... p-TIPS
- 4.... Productivity management tools for women entrepreneurs in agribusiness
- 4.... Common Sense Talk
- 5.... The Internet as a productivity tool for NPOs
- 6... Social productivity: Learning from examples of corporate social responsibility in Japan
- 6... Mission from Vietnam visits Japan
- 7.... p-Experts
- 7.... APO-NPO Update
- 7.... Program calendar
- 8.... Roundtable Conference for the Promotion of the Productivity Movement in Africa
- 8.... APO Photo Contest 2006
- 8.... Boosting private-sector participation

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APO Secretariat Reform Plan*(Continued from page 1)*

The Governing Body gave the Secretary-General a unanimous mandate for his Secretariat Reform Plan. APO Director for Japan Tadao Chino commended the Secretary-General for his leadership in undertaking reform, which he recognized would need time to take effect. However, a start would have to be made. He added that Japan fully supported the reform plan of the Secretary-General. Adding her support, APO Director for the Philippines Margarita R. Songco commented that undertaking reforms would not be easy and might encounter resistance. Despite this, she said that it would be necessary to continue with the reform initiative. APO Director for Thailand Chakramon Phasukavanich commented that the drafting of the plan was the easy part. The most important thing was its implementation. He called on the Governing Body to give its full support to the Secretary-General in carrying out the reforms. 